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In Search of the Spectacular: Travis' Critique of Dummett

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RESUMEN

Según Charles Travis, nuestro language es "sensible a la occasion" [*occasion-sensitive*]. Las condiciones de verdad de todas nuestras oraciones, asi como sus condiciones de corrección, varian dependiendo de las ocasiones en que las usamos. Esto forma parte de una perspectiva mas general del language como algo "sin sombras" [*unshadowed*]. Este artículo desarrolla las objecciones que Travis ha presentado, desde este punto de vista, en contra del anti-realismo de Michael Dummett. Trata de mostrar que los argumentos de Travis son sugerentes aunque no concluyentes. A pesar de ello, se muestra que un anti-realismo sin sombras sigue siendo una posibilidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Charles Travis, Michael Dummett, anti-realismo, sensibilidad a la ocasión*.

ABSTRACT

According to Charles Travis our language is *occasion-sensitive*. The truth-conditions of all our sentences, and their correctness-conditions more generally, vary depending on the occasions on which they are used. This is part of a broader view of language as *unshadowed*. This paper develops objections Travis has made from this viewpoint against Michael Dummett's anti-realism. It aims to show that the arguments are suggestive but inconclusive. For all it shows *unshadowed anti-realism* is a possibility.

KEYWORDS: *Charles Travis, Michael Dummett, Anti-Realism, Occasion-Sensitivity*.

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to reconstruct Travis' arguments against Michael Dummett's views on (anti-)realism. Replies are offered on Dummett's behalf, and it is argued that the anti-Dummettian arguments are inconclusive. In terms of structure, this introductory section will offer a short outline of the above two authors' respective projects and make some preliminary remarks about how and where they intersect. The

following section will then offer an extended argument from the Travisian viewpoint against Dummett. Subsequently, replies will be offered on Dummett's part, and the final section is a short conclusion offering some brief remarks on the broader significance of the dialectic.

The Dummettian View: an Outline

Dummett's anti-realism is, as the name suggests, best understood by contrast with realism. For the realist, truth is epistemically unconstrained — whether or not our statements are true may depend on the obtaining of worldly conditions that are not guaranteed to be epistemically accessible. Further, given that the world is a particular way and no other, any statement we make about those conditions (in sufficiently precise, non-vague, otherwise non-defective) terms will thereby be true or false. This grounds the semantic principle of bivalence. Finally, given a definition of negation in terms of falsity, such that $\neg A$ is true whenever A is false, bivalence then grounds the logical law, Excluded Middle, $A \vee \neg A$.

The anti-realist, in opposition, rejects the idea that the truth of our statements might depend on inaccessible features of reality. Instead, the truth-conditions of our propositions must in principle be recognisable, and thus knowable. Bivalence then lacks the justification the realist gives it, for we have no general guarantee that, for any arbitrary claim, that claim is knowable as true or knowable as false. In turn, the above grounding of Excluded Middle is then also unavailable.[1] Following Crispin Wright, we can call this the 'negative' part of the Dummettian programme [Wright (1987a)].

The positive Dummettian project tries to say more about what the correct semantic theory should then be, and what the correct logic then is. Many of the details can be glossed over for our present purposes, but on the standard line, the semantic theory should be based on the notion of warranted assertibility. Lately, the more popular way of doing so has been to identify truth-conditions with *superassertibility*-conditions [Wright (1992)]. A statement is superassertible iff it is warranted in light of actual evidence, and would remain undefeated by any extension to that evidence. This view makes truth epistemically constrained, and thus the standard justification of bivalence and Excluded Middle remains unavailable. The *revisionist* anti-realist then claims that no alternative justification is to be had, and so our logic ought to be changed from classical to intuitionistic.

Travis' View: an Outline

On one way of presenting Travis' view, the central contrast is between *shadowed* and *unshadowed* conceptions of language. Thus presented, the distinction is a way of categorising philosophical *accounts* of language use, but we may speak derivatively of shadowed and unshadowed languages insofar as a language might be correctly described by either theory. (And it may be, of course, that all possible languages are of just one sort.) Travis defines shadows as ways of representing 'which determine [...] all that is determined as to when what so represented would be true (or false)' [Travis (1998), p. 192]. This view of representation, which he attributes to Frege, and to Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, allows that there be representations that are utterly speaker-independent. That is to say, nothing about what people would do with them affects what they represent. The contrary, unshadowed view is a relative of the use-based conceptions of meaning associated with the later Wittgenstein. On this view representations depend intimately on what people do with them.[2]

Travis' conception of the unshadowed/shadowed distinction can be explicated with regard to two complaints that he makes against traditional conceptions of meaning, like Dummett's. (These are the shadowed conceptions.) First, they do not sufficiently account for the fact that *particular* languages are used by *particular* language users, and the second is that what those users *do* with their utterances, i.e. their broadly practical purposes, is equally neglected. The first complaint is brought to the fore in Travis' discussions of the 'parochial':

> I will refer to as 'parochial' any form, or shape, of some being's thought which is not required by simply being a thinker as such, so that there is room for there to be *thinkers* whose thought lacked that feature […] So, too, any feature of those generalities under which we are equipped to bring things (present things to ourselves) which might be absent from the stock of generalities under which some other sort of thinker is equipped to bring things will be parochial in this sense [Travis (2011), pp. 1-2].

And here is Travis emphasising the second of the above two strands, the role of purpose:

> If the driving idea here were put into a slogan, it might be this: Content is inseparable from point. What is communicated in *our* words lies, inseparably, in what we would expect of them. How our words represent things is a matter of, and not detachable from, their (recognizable) import for our lives [Travis (2006), p. 33].

Using some license, we can then present Travis' view of language use as occasion-sensitive as grounded in these two elements. When we are asked by Travis to consider an occasion of use, an example of which will be given shortly, our attention is drawn to the fact that it is an occasion for a particular individual, and that it involves the particular purposes of that individual.

To illustrate using one of Travis' own examples: when a child, Ghislaine, learns the word 'shoe', she must pick up a collection of skills that allows her to apply it in an occasion-sensitive manner. She must know, for example, that whilst sandals may count as 'shoes' when she is told 'shoes off before entering the bouncy castle', they do not count as 'shoes' when she is told 'shoes must be worn to school'. Only smart shoes count in this second case. This gives rise to context-shifting phenomena. The proposition that Ghislaine is wearing shoes may be true in the former case and false in the latter even though in both instances she is wearing the same things, i.e., sandals.

Travis thinks that the skills Ghislaine exhibits are part and parcel of the general applications of rationality that make up all our purposive behaviour. In order to master the use of 'shoe' we need to recognise the aim of given judgements within the novel situations in which they occur. As it was put above, 'Content is inseparable from point' [Travis (2006), p. 33].

Here there is a direct connection with Dummett, (specifically, in regard to his positive programme,) who, on the contrary, thinks that content is sharply separable from point, in the following sense: he believes that a theory of sense can specify the meanings of our terms independently of a prior specification of their uses in particular contexts. This is part of a broader commitment to the possibility of a certain kind of meaning theory.

Dummett adapts his conception of a meaning theory from Davidson's [Davidson (1967)]. On the Davidsonian view, a meaning theory for a language will have at its core a Tarski-like set of reference and satisfaction clauses, combined with the logical machinery

required to deliver a T-sentence for every sentence of the language. The important thing here, for current purposes, is that the base clauses will provide a description of (a great deal of) what a speaker must know in order to know a language. Dummett differs from Davidson in thinking that the base clauses and the associated notion of truth cannot be realist.[3] Instead, Dummett believes that the core notion of a meaning theory ought to be assertibility of some kind [Dummett (2003c), p. 93]. This is primarily because he does not think that a realist conception of truth allows us to derive the practical uses of the sentences of the language under consideration. That is to say, simply knowing realist truth-conditions is not sufficient for knowing how and when particular sentences are to be asserted, denied and so on.[4]

According to Travis, the problem with both theories, and notably in this connection, Dummett's, is that they are committed to a core set of properties, which are not themselves specified with reference to particular purposes that particular speakers have, on the scale of Ghislaine's concerns with bouncy castles [Travis (2006), p. 13]. Rather, the possible uses Ghislaine might make in the particular case are themselves to be derived, with the addition of further contextual input, from that core. To put it somewhat crudely, on the Dummettian view, the ideal order of explanation is something like this: Ghislaine is able to achieve her communicative purposes because she understands when the proposition 'These are shoes' is true and goes on to derive possible uses for it. On the Travisian view, this cannot be right; there are no conditions that could be understood as the truth-conditions (or more tentatively, correctness-conditions) of the proposition independent of some purpose that she could understand on some particular occasion.

On one reconstruction, Travis' opposition to Dummett could be drawn from this directly. Independent of context, the invariant meaning features of our terms and the rules of composition do not yield truth-apt contents. Until their particular point is realised on some occasion, there is no material sufficiently rich to apply logical laws to. This applies to the law of Excluded Middle as much as it does to any other laws. Space is opened up, then, for the following broad line of argument: The Dummettian view argues from a general view of the nature of sense to the suspension of Excluded Middle. But the whole question of the grounding of any logical law cannot be decided solely by consideration of the nature of sense. Senses alone, insofar as they

are considered apart from their uses on particular occasions, do not determine a truth-apt entity. *A fortiori*, they cannot ground logical laws.

However, the above sketch of an argument is only a sketch. For one thing, it is not obvious that the theory of sense could not partially determine logical laws. We have precedents for handling certain kinds of context-sensitivity within a framework that seems largely amenable to this in the work of, for example, David Kaplan. For Kaplan, terms have a *character*, which determines, in a rule-governed way, the conditions under which propositions containing them are true, given additional input from contextual features. The laws of logic can be explicated on this kind of framework in familiar ways [Kaplan (1989)]. Whilst Travis is at liberty to reject these models, their seeming intelligbility casts doubt on the idea that there can be no core meaning-properties that relate in a systematic way to the eventual output of a semantic theory, whilst themselves stopping short of determining truth-conditions. As for Dummett himself, whilst being no explicit advocate of occasion-sensitivity, it is not obvious that he wanted to phrase his views on meaning theories such as to rule out the very possibility of the sorts of phenomena in which Travis is interested.

More straightforwardly, we can see that the above argument is too quick because it would apply to all logical laws, not just Excluded Middle. Yet at the outset it ought to be the presumption that some laws, e.g. Non-Contradiction, are grounded in some way or other, if we are not to lose logic entirely. It then seems an open possibility that Excluded Middle could either achieve or fail to achieve the same status. Moreover, it seems an open possibility that the sorts of consideration Dummett invokes, albeit perhaps modified to take account of the unshadowed view, might tell for or against it.

Notably, Travis himself has never suggested that there is any quick and obvious way to apply the central insights of the unshadowed view to undermine the (anti-)realist dialectic. His way of connecting the unshadowed view to the Dummettian project has, instead, been more subtle.[5]

I. Sublunary Intuitionism and Natural Isostheneia[6]

The intuitionist position is characterised by the failure to assert bivalence and Excluded Middle but the retention of another semantic principle, *tertium non datur*, and its logical correlate.

> *Tertium non datur*: No statement is neither true nor false.[7]
>
> Excluded Third: $\neg\neg(A \vee \neg A)$

The acceptance of these principles is tantamount to the claim that all a proposition need do to be false is fail to be true. That is, a proposition sets out the conditions under which it would be true. If these conditions fail to obtain then it is by virtue of that fact false. There is no middle ground. Dummett thinks this holds quite generally, and it would be just as wrong for the anti-realist to reject it as it would for the realist. The principal Dummettian reason, as Travis sees it, is as follows:[8]

> The question is whether there is a place for a convention that determines, just by the meaning of an assertoric utterance of a certain form, that, when all the relevant information is known, the speaker must be said neither to have been right nor to have been wrong: and it seems clear that there is no such place [Dummett (1978d), p. xviii].

That is to say, Dummett thinks that rejecting *tertium non datur* is akin to specifying by way of an extra convention, how things would be if the statement in question were neither true nor false. And this, it does indeed seem, is absurd. We might ask — what is it for that third condition *not* to be fulfilled? Does that require a new convention too? Unless we are to embark on an infinite regress then eventually we will require a convention of which the Dummettian story is true, one which sets a condition whose contradictory is met simply by failing to meet the condition itself.

Call this strand in the Dummettian view the one-convention-condition. Travis' argument begins by attempting to show that we can accept it the whilst still rejecting *tertium non datur*. He does so by showing how a proposition may fail to be either true or false in a way that does not require an extra convention, but rather arises from the kind of failure that attends all unshadowed language use. Dummett, thinks Travis, is blind to this kind of failure.

The argument is best understood with reference to a certain class of problem cases involving what Travis calls 'natural isostheneia'. Consider then a scenario in which Max and Pia are discussing whether to visit their friend Zoë.[9] Max innocently asserts 'Zoë will be at home'. Unbeknownst to all, however, Zoë has just died, and in her living room there is now only her corpse. The question then is, is what

Max said true? Is it false? Travis thinks we can't say either. On the one hand, Zoë's mortal form is within the walls of her dwellings, but on the other, Zoë is not really there, for – as Travis puts it – the departed are no longer with us. If we say that Max's assertion is true then we fail to do justice to the second thought, but if we say it is false then we fail to do justice to the first. So, on Travis' view we ought to conclude that Max's utterance was neither true nor false. Given the unexpected turn of events, his utterance was what J. L. Austin would have called a misfire. This being so, contra Dummett, we don't have a guarantee of *tertium non datur*.

Accepting the above reasoning shows how we can admit the one-convention-condition without admitting *tertium non datur*. We see how there could be a dual failure, failure of its being the case that A and failure of its being the case that $\neg A$, which does not come from the successful meeting of an extra convention, the extra convention that would generate the absurdity noted above.

One way of trying to retain *tertium non datur* would be to claim that on this occasion Max's words didn't express a proposition, i.e. a truth-apt entity, at all. On this line of response, they should be treated like stars, stones, hats and utterances like 'Lilliburlero', things of which the question of truth does not properly arise. Travis' response to this relies on the idea that what happened to Max could have happened to any of us. The only reason to claim that his utterance was not truth-apt would be that we could contrast it with a kind of semantic entity that was not subject to the possibility of such misfortune. But the only kind of entity that would be thus immune would be a shadow, i.e. something like a Fregean thought or Tractarian proposition, whose content was independent of what we happen to do with it. According to Travis we have no right nor need to assume that there could be such things [Travis (1998), §4].

This is an important move in Travis' argument. A proponent of the traditional or shadowed view of propositions is liable to try any number of strategies to explain away the Zoë case. A standard response, for example, is to dismiss the above thought on the grounds that there is a way of resolving what Max said such that it is sufficiently specific to rule out the unexpected failure. So, for example, we read it as 'Max said that Zoë will be *alive* at home', and so strictly speaking he did say something false. The problem with this view is that there is an indefinite variety of accidents that could befall Max's speech-act. Perhaps Zoë has mutated into a fly-like creature, as in the

famous film, or perhaps Zoë has been duplicated, and one of the duplicates is in the house and one has gone next door. Or she and the entire building have been picked up by a hurricane and deposited wholly intact in Kansas, or she is at home but just about to leave. There is no end to the unforeseen permutations that may make Max's speech-act inept, but would make the same words uttered in a different context perfectly apposite. To posit a semantic entity that could correspond to Max's utterance and yet would pick between all these possibilities would be to commence on a never-ending series of *post hoc* emendations.[10]

It looks, then, as though Travis' argument, if successful, would rule out intuitionism in favour of something more radical, the widespread positing of truth-value gaps. However, this is not the end of the story. If it were, then Travis would himself be a revisionist, one at least as radical as Dummett. The difference is as follows: For Travis, there is another way of looking at our language use which suggests a quite different conclusion — that our logic remain classical. This corresponds to the way we look at it as a committed participant in a linguistic exchange. From this perspective we assume that things are going to go well. We close our eyes to certain doubts, assuming that we won't be left in the lurch by an unexpected turn of events. So, in the above example, we presuppose that Zoë will still be alive, wherever she is. In Travis' words, 'as long as we see statements from an object-level, internal perspective [...] we see them in a way that assumes, or presupposes, bivalence' [Travis (1998), p. 186]. To elaborate, he thinks that if we make even the minimal presuppositions that are required in order to allow us to assert *tertium non datur*, we should go the whole hog and presuppose bivalence too. That is to say, once we consider a linguistic usage all-in, with all the presuppositions and surrounding assumptions, the only reasonable attitude to take is classical.

We are then left in a peculiar position: from one perspective we should be as revisionary as the anti-realist, and from another we should remain classical. From this we may take it at least i) that there is no position whereby we get the intuitionist's peculiar cocktail, the acceptance of *tertium non datur* and the rejection of bivalence, ii.) that we are liable to be misled into thinking that there is by confusing the two perspectives laid out above. To clarify, the import of (i) regards (putative) facts about the way ordinary people use language, and specifically, their implicit attitudes to the logical laws in question. The import of (ii) pertains to philosophers, specifically those of a Dum-

mettian persuasion, who attempt to formulate explicit theories about how ordinary language use works, or better, ought to work. Travis' conjecture is that Dummettians fail to realise that language users operate in the above way. The linguistic data that might support the suspension of bivalence in fact supports the stronger suspension of tertium non datur, and for good measure we sometimes (when all is going happily) appear to accept both bivalence and *tertium non datur*.

It might be objected that Dummett is not, and ought not to be, interested in how ordinary speakers tend to assert and reason. Many of the criticisms Dummett makes of classical logic are normative. They concern how we must reason if we are to reason well. And then it may seem that nothing in the above scenario speaks directly to them, for it is quite open to the Dummettian to argue that Max and co. are simply using language badly.

Responding fully to this complaint would be impossible here, but a few comments may be made. It is really a specific instance of a general worry — how are we to balance the data about what speakers actually tend to do and say with a good logical theory about what they ought to do and say? If we assign too much weight to the actual practices of speakers, then we are liable to lose logic entirely, for everyday discourse is muddled in any number of ways. On the other hand, an interesting logical theory, insofar as it might apply to our natural language, must apply to the contents expressible in that language, and since those contents are determined by the practices of speakers, we cannot wholly discount those practices, even if they are problematic when held against our independent views on logic.

Conceding, then, that the above matter cannot be settled decisively here, we may instead use the above problem as a further way of contextualising Travis' complaint. Travis' accusation is that Dummett's project does not take sufficiently seriously the variable nature of our actual linguistic practices. Dummett's own views on the correct logic are then to be criticised as only applying to a fictitious possible set of contents — the shadows.

III. Unshadowed Anti-Realism

That, then, is Travis' train of argument, or perhaps better, a reconstructed train of argument. The question is how the anti-realist, set

in Dummett's mould, should respond to it. One way of doing so would be to reinstate the idea of a proposition which could determine, out of context, just how things must be for it to be true. This would be to defend a shadowed version of the Dummettian thesis. However, that is not the course that will be taken here. Instead, the question to be asked is whether the general conception of language as unshadowed can be made compatible with a modified version of the Dummettian thesis. The answer here to be proposed is *yes*.

Travis' argument ultimately relies on the anti-realist being unable to draw a viable distinction between the utterly general pitfalls that imperil all language use, illustrated in the Max case, and the special reasons that might be adduced by anti-realist arguments. It is on the assumption that no such distinction can be drawn that the reasons for rejecting bivalence which the anti-realist typically adduces are simply agglomerated with other reasons, reasons that are supposed to tell in equal measure against *tertium non datur*.

In order to tell whether this is legitimate, we need to consider the arguments the anti-realist typically gives. Travis has the global variant as his main target, and so we should consider that first. To put the negative argument in the way that Wright does, the central target is recognition-transcendent truth-conditions for the statements in our language [see e.g. Wright (1989), §II]. Such conditions cannot be possessed, it is argued, by a language the meaning of which is appropriately determined by use. For suppose they were; then there would have to be a kind of use that manifested the differential commitment to a particular set of truth-conditions obtaining. In many cases, the only way such a difference could be manifested would be with respect to a possible difference in evidence. (A speaker might, for example, be disposed to assent to a proposition in light of one piece of evidence but not to another.) But this is absurd. There cannot, by the initial supposition, be such a difference in evidence, for that would make the difference recognisable. Thus we may reject the supposition.

The question, then, is not whether this line of argument is independently plausible, but whether Travis' objection significantly weakens it. With that in mind, let us consider a case where Max's presuppositions are not yet defeated; he has not, up until now at least, been presented with a corpse. The anti-realist's first question, then, is whether generally speaking, the notion of truth attaching to the statement, 'Zoë will be at home' can be recognition-transcendent. Could it

be, for example, that by the name 'Zoë', we referred to the hidden soul of Zoë, a soul that could perhaps transmigrate without our knowing? (Max might later like to think this given the circumstances.) The interesting thing here is that the Dummettian can still presumably argue that what it takes for the statement 'Zoë will be at home' to be true can't go beyond recognisable criteria, for example the appearance of her reading *Dr. Zhivago* in front of the fire. Otherwise there would have to be a difference that made no difference, and that, he thinks, is not how language works. But if that is the case, then contrary to Travis' claim, Dummett's initial argument against recognition-transcendent truth-conditions seems at first pass to be unaffected by his argument.

On the standard revisionist view, we then go on to argue that the denial of recognition-transcendence implies the rejection of bivalence. This is for the simple reason that because we can't in general guarantee that a given statement is recognisably true or false, we shouldn't commit to the principle that it *is* true or false. Truth and falsity are, after all, now taken to be coextensive with recognisable truth and falsity. It's notable of course that 'Zoë will be at home' is, in ordinary circumstances, recognisable as true or false, so it isn't a good illustration of this. But any problems that thereby arise are analogous to those that pertain to the application of bivalence to effectively decidable statements in general. Nothing that Travis adduces makes these problems any better or worse. (Consider, perhaps, 'Zoë's descendants will one day populate every continent on earth'.)

The case seems even clearer when we turn our attention away from the global anti-realist towards the local anti-realist. Suppose, for example, that the anti-realist proposes that our mathematical statements are true in virtue of the proofs that we are able to construct, not the existence of platonic objects. This being so, he argues, we have a direct route to the principle that their truth is coextensive with recognisable truth (i.e. provability). Given, then, the additional premise that we can't guarantee we have proofs for the truth or falsity of every mathematical statement (e.g. Goldbach's conjecture), we shouldn't accept bivalence. It seems implausible that this line of argument would become any less convincing if we factored in the presupposition that we weren't going to encounter a misfire. The only step remaining in the standard revisionist argument is then to connect the unwillingness to assert bivalence with the unwillingness to accept Excluded Middle. This step is not indisputable, but it seems that nothing in the present argument speaks against it.[11]

It is worth mentioning here Travis' claim that a logical calculus is an *object of comparison* [Travis (2002)]. The idea, which he derives from Wittgenstein, is that a logic is at best a comparator for our actual inferential practices. This is certainly a different view of logic to that which Dummett countenanced, at least in terms of tone. But insofar as it represents a substantial difference, and one that may bear on the possibility of a revisionary argument, it cannot be plausibly held. Oversimplifying, we can understand the idea in two different ways, corresponding to whether or not there is a good answer to the question: *What makes one logic the correct comparator?* If there is a good answer to this question, then the revisionary argument can be phrased in the obvious terms: the claim would be that the intuitionistic calculus and not the classical is the appropriate comparator. That is to say, it mirrors the actual standards of the discourse. On the other hand, if the answer is *no*, which is to say, there is not even a question of good or bad comparison, then the thesis is incredible. Or, more weakly, it is another name for the bleeding edge of conventionalism, the claim that anything goes — our discursive practices have no rules whatsoever. In either case, then, the idea of logic as an object of comparison has no clear and serious bearing on the Dummettian question.

To return to the root of the issue, then, it would seem that on any plausible view – shadowed or unshadowed – there must be some way of deciding on the appropriate logic to apply within assumptions of reasonable felicity. And then the question is: why shouldn't the reasons for so deciding include those the revisionist ordinarily gives? The above consideration of them shows that they retain at least some purchase even on the unshadowed view. It seems, then, that the revisionist argument can be made whilst taking into account the dependence on parochial factors that Travis' account posits. *Contra* the objection, revisionism does not depend on the shadowed view of language. Admittedly, we may have to alter much of the Dummettian framework, but that was only to be expected. The result of our exercise was always going to be a mongrel.

III. Conclusion, and Some Remarks on Generalising these Arguments

Travis' argument can be thought of as an instance of a general concern for language-focal approaches to the realism debate. Starting

from a radically use-based view of meaning, it calls into question the potential significance of higher-order philosophical generalisations regarding our linguistic practices. The more variable the function of our individual utterances, the less scope there is for ascribing general principles delimiting the function of particular classes of utterance types. The idea of bivalence being just such a principle is but one example. What other authors scent as cruces of realism might not be metaphysically revealing features of regimented areas of language, but rather fleeting qualities of conversation, alternatively possessed or lacked depending on the whims of context. Properties such as bivalence, cognitive command [Wright (1992)], direction of fit [Blackburn (1984)] and the like, might not be features carved solemnly on the megalithic heads – ethics, mathematics, physics – laid across the philosophical coastline, but instead the patterns of sunlight, frost, and guano that by turns decorate them. Put less figuratively, the idea that we might read off significant metaphysical commitments from independently characterisable features of discourse is put under pressure if we see the status of such rules as grounded in relatively haphazard and parochial practices.

In the course of this paper, I have argued that Travis' argument on this count is less conclusive than he thinks. This has been done in a charitable spirit, however, as I have sought to reconcile what I see to be central to the Travisian account with what I see to be central to the Dummettian account. Perhaps this compromise will please no one, but it is I believe cogent.

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NOTES

[1] There are several well-known alternative presentations of the anti-realist argument, the differences between which I will for the most part gloss over here. Any detailed treatment would have to consider, *inter alia*, the differences between Dummett (1978a), (1978b), (2003a), (2003b).

[2] See also Acero (2010) for an account of Travis' view.

[3] It is an interesting question here as to whether or not Travis' view would apply to a 'modest' theory of meaning. Dummett is explicit that a theory of meaning should by contrast be 'full-blooded'. By this latter is meant that the theory should be phrased in such a way as to allow, in some cases at least, that someone who did not already understand the language in question could come to understand it by learning the theory. The contrast motivating the distinction is with the Davidsonian view that a theory of meaning need only be comprehensible to a speaker who has already mastered the language (and thus be 'modest'). The objection would appear to apply equally to both, with the reason being that the modest/full-blooded distinction concerns how we might come to understand the semantic properties cited in the theory. Travis' opposition, on the other hand, is to the very idea that there might be semantic properties that achieve all of what Davidson and Dummett propose of them, regardless of how one might come to be acquainted with such properties.

[4] How closely the Dummettian meaning theory should model the Davidsonian version is a good question, but orthogonal here. See e.g. Dummett (1991) and Wright (1987b) for further discussion.

[5] In an early work [Travis (1989)] Travis claims that the unshadowed conception entails that the correctness-conditions for our utterances depend on what (ideal) members of our community take to be reasonable in particular circumstances. This in turn entails the ''spectacular thesis'' that logical revisionism, in the mode of Dummett, is incoherent [Travis (1989), p. 308]. I do not discuss this objection here as I think that it is best thought of as an instance of a more general issue well discussed in Wright (1987c), with reference to Dummett's presentation of the problems in Dummett (1978c). Moreover, Travis himself has seemingly moved away from it, preferring the presently discussed argument.

[6] Some of the arguments of this section incorporate material from a talk given at the ALWS 2009. Thanks to all involved for useful comments and criticisms. I have also benefitted from discussions with several members of the Cambridge faculty and students over a number of years. Im particular, I'd like to thank Jane Heal, Tim button, Luca Incurvati, Rob Trueman, Florian Steinberger, Michael Potter, Arif Ahmed and Simon Blackburn.

[7] The principles are named and formulated this way in Dummett (1978d), p. xix.

[8] It is necessary to note that Excluded third can be derived both classically and intuitionistically from Non-Contradiction, so rejecting it would, under either logic, ipso facto amount to rejecting Non-Contradiction. In many contexts of discussion this would be an independent reason to accept Excluded Third. Indeed, Travis himself writes of this consequence, saying that his position "needs urgently to disarm it" [Travis (1998), fn.1]. But one may wonder whether someone already questioning Excluded Third for the sorts of reasons Travis gives ought to be all that worried here. Is it really much worse

for Max to say — 'At home? Well, he is and he isn't', than it is for him to say that it is neither the case that he is nor that he isn't? In any event, we may leave this further problem to one side. Travis himself does not offer a direct solution to this problem in the cited work, but his view here appears to be that the problem is avoided by appeal to the idea that a logical law does not itself say that it should apply in any particular case. For more see his (2002).

[9] Based on Travis (1998), pp. 179-80.

[10] Andrea Iacona [Iacona (2006), (2010)] has argued that cases of natural isostheneia are case of underspecification. What the speaker (and indeed, the audience) have in mind does not select between the alive-at-home and not-necessarily-alive-at-home readings. One conclusion to draw, then, is not that the proposition is neither true not false, but rather that `the proposition is either true or false, although it is not clear *whether* it is true or false' [Iacona (2010), p. 300]. The latter is an option insofar as on each of the specifications it is true or false given the set-up, but that neither specification is actually given. Iacona uses this to conclude that even on the latter possibility the justification of bivalence, i.e. as true or false relative to specifications, is very different to that ordinarily given for it.

[11] For some of Wright's attempts to maintain a classical conception of logic in the face of the negative argument see his 1987c. We there see attempts to semantically ground classical logic through supervaluationist means, and, alternatively, to make sense of ungrounded laws via a form of conventionalism.

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